

Scioto Mile Parks will Spur Downtown Revitalization and RiverSouth Development

An integrated system of bike and pedestrian paths, urban streets, new riverfront park spaces, and activities along the Scioto River will bring recreational and economic benefits to Downtown Columbus and drive development plans for the new RiverSouth District.

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Contact: Mike Brown, 645-6428

Kathleen Murphy, 221-2885 ext. 16

(Columbus) -- The Columbus Downtown Development Corporation (CDDC) and the City of Columbus unveiled concepts today for the "Scioto Mile," a mile long, downtown stretch of the Scioto River which runs from the Arena District on the north to the Whittier Peninsula on the south. Key elements of the planned Scioto Mile include a grand Promenade along a narrowed Civic Center Drive, a river-level walkway along the eastern edge of the Scioto River, an updating of Battelle and Bicentennial Parks, and green connectors to North Bank Park and the Whittier Peninsula. The Scioto Mile will include continuous bikepaths, pedestrian walkways and family activities along the river, and will "green up" downtown streets like Gay and Town that lead to the river.

"All great cities have great parks. While the Scioto Mile will serve as a great place for people to gather and to stage our popular summer festivals, it will also serve as an economic engine for downtown revitalization," said Columbus Mayor Michael B. Coleman.

"If our downtown housing boom of 3,000 units in two short years is to continue, we need a people-friendly park, a front and back yard for our downtown residents," said Thomas E. Hoaglin, Chair of CDDC, which is managing the design and construction of the Scioto Mile and overseeing the development of the new RiverSouth District.

Michael Van Valkenburgh, one of the nation's most celebrated landscape architects, presented the preliminary Scioto Mile design concepts. Van Valkenburgh served as a jury member in the competition for the World Trade Center Memorial, and his firm recently designed the entire new Pennsylvania Avenue entry to the White House. Michael Van Valkenburgh Associates has designed over 300 landscapes worldwide.

Along with the design concepts, community members present for the briefing heard the important impact parks have on economic development.

City Council President Matt Habash pointed to a study of home property values from 1999-2003 near Westgate Park in Columbus. "Homes bordering the park sold for 7.5% more than homes a block or more away," said Habash. "If we see that kind of property value increase downtown, it would more than pay for the park and substantially increase the city's tax base."

The Scioto Mile riverfront development is a key strategy of the Downtown Business Plan that was launched in April 2002 to revitalize Downtown Columbus in time for the City's Bicentennial in 2012.

"The Scioto Mile is essential to continued residential and commercial development - both of which are necessary to ensure a vibrant round-the-clock experience in Downtown Columbus," said W. G. "Jerry" Jurgensen, Nationwide CEO and CDDC board member.

"The Scioto Mile will help make our downtown a place we're all proud to call home," said City Council Member and Parks Committee Chair Kevin Boyce. "It will enliven our downtown neighborhoods and provide great recreational and cultural opportunities for all our neighborhoods to enjoy."

The Scioto Mile will be built in phases, as funding becomes available. The design development phase will include determining construction costs for each component of the project. The initial phases are likely to be the promenade, the river-level walkway, the reopening and restoration of Gay Street from Front to Civic Center Drive, other street improvements, and the construction of a green connector from Bicentennial Park to the Whittier Peninsula. CDDC expects that funding will come from federal, state, and, as appropriate, local governments. Design development costs will total \$2.1 million with \$1.68 million authorized by City Council from funding from the State of Ohio, and another \$400,000 from a \$3 million federal grant for transportation improvements in RiverSouth. Future phases could include improvements to Bicentennial and Battelle Parks. The Scioto Mile will include public art created by Ann Hamilton, a Columbus native and one of the nation's most acclaimed visual artists.

CDDC is working with the City's Recreation and Parks Department to develop a long-term funding plan to assure the maintenance and operations of the Scioto Mile. Other city departments are focusing on transportation and sewer improvements along the river to assure a pleasant, safe experience.

Columbus Downtown Development Corporation is a private, non-profit development corporation created to realize a visionary, community plan to make downtown Columbus among the most attractive center cities in the United States. The board consists of senior business and institutional leaders who have a strong commitment to downtown revitalization.

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Contact: Mike Brown, 614-645-6428
Kathleen Murphy, 614-221-2885
Angela Mingo, 614-645-7380

**Mayor, Council and Business Leaders Create Team
to Help Rebuild Downtown's RiverSouth District**

(Columbus) A new approach to investing in downtown, "The New Community Authority for Riversouth" will be considered by Columbus City Council this evening.

"This new community authority will permit the Columbus Downtown Development Corporation (CDDC) to take the first steps in revitalizing the RiverSouth area into a vibrant new downtown neighborhood," said Lawrence L. Fisher, interim executive director of the CDDC.

Guided by a team of local, public and private sector leaders, the Authority will team up with the Columbus Downtown Development Corporation and the City to re-develop RiverSouth. Future investments are expected to generate housing, entertainment, restaurants, parking and infrastructure, retail and commercial spaces.

"The new RiverSouth neighborhood stands as a key component of the our business plan for Downtown, and we are all united in our goal of replacing this sea of surface parking lots with exciting new buildings, parks and homes," said City Council President Matthew D. Habash.

Columbus City Council's vote will establish the New Community Authority, create district boundaries and appoint the board of trustees. The new entity will be empowered to issue bonds for RiverSouth projects as identified by the CDDC and the City. Columbus City Council will approve each specific project before bonds are the issued.

"This is just one of many new, innovative initiatives that we are pushing forward to leverage investment in downtown's future," said Mayor Michael B. Coleman. "As we continue to search for the right projects, we are giving our community the tools it needs to succeed."

New Community Authority boundaries mirror property that will be owned by the CDDC, specifically six-acres including the Lazarus-Macy's store and adjoining Federated Department Store landholdings, including the old parking garage and surface parking lots.

Appointments to the Board of Trustees include Trudy Bartley, City of Columbus Department of Development; Mike Curtin, The Dispatch Printing Company; Terri Gehr, Columbus State Community College; Wyatt Kingseed, Columbus City Council; Ty Marsh, President, Greater Columbus Chamber of Commerce; Bob Milbourne, Columbus

Partnership; Sandy Neely, Nationwide; Bruce Soll, Limited Brands; and Larry Sowers, Regional Council of Carpenters.

Other communities have created New Community Authorities to finance real estate projects, most notably New Albany, which used the mechanism to finance a new high school, fire station and a street. Recently, the City of Columbus created a New Community Authority to fund infrastructure improvements for Jeffrey Place, a 40-acre neighborhood development in Italian Village.

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